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DOE ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES BULLETIN

JULY/AUGUST 1997

NAAG/DOE WORKGROUP MEETING

The National Association of Attorneys General, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Energy, hosted a State/DOE Workgroup Meeting in Aiken, South Carolina on May 7-9, 1997, in Augusta, Georgia which included a tour of the Savannah River Site (SRS) in Aiken, South Carolina. The facility tour took place on the first day of the Meeting and the second and third days were devoted to dialogue and presentations from the Workgroup members and DOE.

Tour of the Savannah. River Site Facility. The focus of the tour was the technology and operation of SRS's radioactive glass vitrification facility for high-level radioactive waste. SRS's Defense Waste Processing Facility converts high-level nuclear waste currently stored at SRS into a solid glass form suitable for long-term storage. SRS has approximately 34 million gallons of high-level liquid waste stored in 51 underground carbon-shell tanks and it will take approximately 25 years to vitrify all of high-level waste in inventory.

DOE-State Dialogue. The second and third days of the Meeting were devoted to discussion of on-going Workgroup activities as well as recent developments, and a session on dispute resolution. The Workgroup advanced its draft guidance on the dissemination of radionuclide information as it pertains to the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act and the Atomic Energy Act, and DOE updated the states on its recent efforts to address natural resource damages at its facilities. Other issues discussed include DOE's Ten-Year Plan (now known as the 2006 Plan), proposed legislative Superfund reforms, and DOE's proposed vitrification and immobilized mixed waste debris rules. DOE and State participants outlined their concerns with these efforts and discussed common goals and objectives underlying these efforts.

**DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY ANNOUNCES PREFERRED STRATEGIES FOR
MANAGEMENT OF RADIOACTIVE AND HAZARDOUS WASTES**

The Final Waste Management Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (WM PEIS) is a nationwide study examining the environmental impacts of managing approximately 2 million cubic meters of radioactive wastes from past, present, and future DOE activities. The WM PEIS will seek to help DOE continue to comply with applicable laws and regulations and protect workers, public health and safety, and the environment. The WM PEIS allows the public and DOE decision-makers to make comparisons of the impacts of various potential configurations for the management of DOE wastes. The goal is a nationwide strategy to treat, store, and dispose of wastes in a safe, responsible and efficient manner that minimizes the impacts to workers and the public.

Wastes analyzed in the WM PEIS result primarily from nuclear weapons production, research, and related activities. These wastes are categorized into five waste types--low-level mixed wastes (LLMW), low-level wastes (LLW), transuranic wastes (TRUW), high-level wastes (HLW) and hazardous wastes (HW). Generally, the Department favors decentralized treatment of LLW at sites where it is generated and stored. LLMW (which is also chemically hazardous) would be treated according to the Site Treatment Plans and consent orders that were negotiated with host states under the Federal Facility Compliance Act. The Department prefers to dispose of these wastes at two or three regional sites to be selected from among six sites: Idaho National Environmental Engineering Laboratory (INEEL), Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL), Nevada Test Site (NTS), Savannah River Site (SRS), Oak Ridge Reservations (ORR), or Hanford Site. All are currently conducting disposal operations for mixed or low-level waste.

The Department will announce its preferred sites for disposal after further consultations with the states and the public and before making a final decision. The Department also prefers decentralized treatment and storage of its transuranic waste, with some regionalized treatment potentially occurring at INEEL, SRS, and ORR. Storage of treated high-level waste would occur at the four sites where it was generated which are Hanford, INEEL, SRS and the West Valley Demonstration Project. The Department prefers to continue to treat its non-wastewater hazardous waste at commercial facilities.

The final WM PEIS has included opportunities for public review and comment. It considers alternative configurations in terms of their costs, potential health and safety impacts on waste management, transportation and workers, and environmental and socioeconomic effects on some 50 million Americans who reside near DOE sites.

Information may be accessed from the WM PEIS bulletin board at <http://www.em.doe.gov/peisbb/>. Copies of the document or a summary can be obtained from the Center for Environmental Management Information, P.O. Box 23769, Washington, D.C. 20026-3769, or by calling toll-free 1-800 736-3282 (in DC 202-863-5084).

DOE'S EXPERIENCE WITH ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS (EMS) AND ISO 14001

What is an EMS? An environmental management system (EMS) is that portion of an organization's overall management structure that addresses the immediate and long-term impact of its products, services, and processes on the environment. An EMS provides consistency and order in organizational methodologies via the allocation of resources, assignment of responsibilities, and continuous improvement of practices, procedures, and processes: An EMS is vital to an organization's ability to anticipate and meet varied environmental performance expectations and to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements.

What is ISO 14001? The ISO 14001 standard is a comprehensive systems standard that calls for organizations to conduct their environmental affairs within a defined management system that is integrated with overall management activity. It is the only ISO 14000 standard against which an organization's environmental management system will be audited (by a third party auditor or internal auditor) if it chooses to have its EMS registered or certified. The five core elements of an ISO 14001 EMS include: *Environmental Policy, Planning, Implementation & Operation, Checking & Corrective Action, and Management Review.*

Supports other DOE Initiatives. ISO 14001 supports several diverse environment, safety and health initiatives the Department is undertaking by providing a corporate framework for enhanced environmental management. These include: EPA's Code of Environmental Management Principles, Contract Reform, Integrated Safety Management System, Pollution Prevention, Voluntary Protection Program, and Responsible Care.

Current DOE Activities. Two DOE-wide working groups have recently been formed to promote environmental management excellence within DOE. The Office of Environmental Policy and Assistance (EH-41) chairs a DOE Facilities Environmental Management Systems Working Group that consists of key DOE-HQ and field staff who are actively involved with the implementation of ISO 14000 in their programs and facilities. The purpose of this group, is to identify key issues in promoting or hindering the use of ISO 14000 at DOE sites. The Energy Facility Contractors Group (EFCOG) Working Group on ISO 14000 consists of DOE management and operating contractors. This Workgroup's purpose is to exchange information and lessons learned on the implementation of ISO 14000 series of EMS standards and their implications for integrating strategic environment, safety, and health management programs into the daily operations at DOE sites. Both working groups have conducted regular teleconferences and videoconferences and have coordinated closely in the exchange of information and identification of EMS implementation issues across DOE.

EH-41 is developing an ISO 14000/EMS homepage to serve as a Federal clearinghouse to share information, provide key DOE and other Federal agency contacts, list available training, and eventually serve to share information related to EMS implementation.

Finally, several DOE facilities have been moving forward with the implementation of ISO 14001 in their environmental programs. The Kansas City Plant's contractor, Allied Signal, recently became the first DOE contractor to receive ISO 14001 certification by an outside auditor. The Savannah River Site has undergone a pre-assessment by a third party auditor and anticipates ISO certification in 1997. The Hanford facility incorporated EMS requirements into its M&O contract with Fluor Daniel and is integrating its EMS into an overall Environment, Safety, and Health Management System. West Valley and the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant are conducting gap analyses to determine current conformance with ISO 14001. The Oak Ridge and Idaho Operations offices are conducting gap analyses and preparing action plans for the implementation of environmental management systems based on ISO 14001.

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NEWS BRIEFS

- ☞ *Working Draft of the New DOE Strategic Plan.* The Working draft of the New DUE Strategic Plan dated June 16, 1997 is available on the DOE webpage at <http://www.doe.gov>.
- ☞ *Department of Energy Overhauls Contracting.* Final policies for the Department's contract reform initiatives were published in the Federal Register on June 27, 1997.
- ☞ *Accelerating Cleanup: Focus on 2006 Discussion Draft.* DOE's Office of Environmental Management (EM) has proposed a strategy to accelerate site cleanup and enhance performance of the cleanup program. The strategy focuses in particular on completing work at as many sites as possible by the end of fiscal year 2006 to meet the challenge of achieving those goals, EM will require input from Tribal Nations and stakeholders. Requests for copies of the Discussion Draft should be directed to the Center for Environmental Management Information at 800-736-3282 or (202) 863-5084.

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